

G20: COLDIRETTI AND NOVAMONT LAUNCH AGRICULTURE 4.0 PLAN

Working with farmers to combat climate change

Coldiretti and Novamont have launched their plan for the development of agriculture 4.0, which has grown by 20% over the last year, generating record revenues of €540 million. The announcement was made by Coldiretti at the G20 summit in connection with the birth of Mater-Agro, the new completely farmer-centric company. On this occasion Piazza Santa Croce, in the heart of the city of Florence, became the setting for “The agriculture of the future” with food at centre stage, combining tradition and innovation, while respecting the environment, health and the local area against climate change.

Mater-Agro, a company whose shareholders also include farmers, was created by Coldiretti, the largest farmers’ association in Europe, and Novamont, a pioneer and international leader in the bioplastics and biochemicals sector. The new company plans to promote an open innovation model involving agriculture and industry, helping agricultural entrepreneurs to maintain good crop yields through sustainable agricultural solutions. The strategy includes bio-materials to enhance plant health, biolubricants, biodegradable mulching film and other biodegradable bioplastic applications in addition to the development of crops capable of coping with the effects from climate change on temperatures and water resources.

Through Mater-Agro, Coldiretti and Novamont will design protocols to help regenerate polluted and unstable soils at risk of desertification, creating an ‘experimental farm’ where farmers and researchers will be trained on the transformation of degraded areas into centres of innovation and development for the efficient and sustainable management of crops and to face the new challenges posed by climate change.

In order to promote and distribute new products and services, the project will use the network of the Italian Agricultural Consortia – Bonifiche Ferraresi.

“We are working together to develop Italian agriculture which is the greenest in Europe, thanks to its leadership in terms of added value, sustainability and quality,” explained Coldiretti president Ettore Prandini. He highlighted that “the project aims to support bioplastic and biochemical value chains by promoting technical and scientific networks in local areas to create an Italian green biochemicals chain with research and innovation capable of providing an effective response to the effects of climate change.”

“In light of the unprecedented crisis facing humanity, which increasingly requires us to make courageous choices to bring about an ecological transition which we cannot put off any longer, Mater-Agro aims to be a source of innovation in which bio-based chemicals and agriculture combine together by utilising research, innovation and good farming practices. We aim to promote the circular bioeconomy as a decisive element in designing a more sustainable future for everyone, in order to do more with less,” said Catia Bastioli, CEO of Novamont.

Novamont and Coldiretti have worked together for years to create a model of cooperation which brings innovation and regeneration to the agricultural sector through the bioplastics value chain, starting with vegetable oils. The collaboration began over ten years ago in the experimental fields of central Italy, with the cultivation of cardoon and safflower on marginal lands and the development of products designed to supply unique, sustainable solutions to help with the recovery of polluted ecosystems. An agreement was signed in 2015 for cardoon cultivation, followed by another in 2019 for sustainable production of ‘Made in Italy’ sunflower oil. In 2020, Novamont and Coldiretti, working with the University of Bologna and the Polytechnic University of Turin, promoted the creation of the Re Soil Foundation, whose goal is to connect scientific, technological, environmental and humanistic knowledge to become a meeting point for the various Italian and European companies focused on the soil.

These are the ‘tools’ of the green revolution provided by green chemistry:

BIO PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS

Bio plant protection products containing extremely high concentrations of pelargonic acid are effective at controlling annual and perennial weed growth in public areas, vineyards and orchards, in controlling axillary bud growth in tobacco, in the pre-harvest drying of potatoes and in thinning the flowering of pome fruits. They represent the ideal alternative to traditional solutions whose use is increasingly being called into question. Rapidly biodegradable in the soil and with very low water solubility, bio plant protection products do not generate residues in the soil or on treated plants, and therefore do not affect the germination of seeds in the soil or root systems, leaving the fertility of the soil unaltered and preserving its biodiversity and resistance to erosion.

BIOLUBRICANTS

Liquid mixtures for the lubrication of mechanical parts of tractors and agricultural machinery, providing the optimal solution for environmental protection. With equivalent characteristics to traditional mineral oil-based products, they are

obtained from renewable sources and their biodegradability gives them a high environmental profile while also providing greater fire safety thanks to a flashpoint of over 280°. In addition, due to their high viscosity index, biolubricants allow pumps to work with less effort and therefore reduce energy consumption.

BIODEGRADABLE MULCHING FILM

If plastics used in farming are not correctly collected and disposed of they can have a significant environmental impact, contaminating the soil and affecting soil fertility and health. In particular, there are real problems with the end-of-life disposal of plastic sheeting used for fruit and vegetable cultivation, which is typically very dirty and therefore hard to recycle. The biodegradability attribute of the film means it can be left in the soil, and once incorporated it is converted by microorganisms into carbon dioxide, water and biomass, without negative effects on the soil and avoiding the production of any plastic waste. The film is then completely biodegraded without leaving any residue in the soil.

Further information:

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